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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART III. EUROPE

Section 11 - Italy

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-02882

III.11 ITALY

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At 31 December 1993, the refugee population in Italy stood at approximately 47,500 persons, including persons from the former Yugoslavia who enjoy temporary protection. The estimated 12,500 Convention refugees were made up of nearly 40 nationalities. Some 5,350 (42.8 per cent) are of East European origin, 1,700 (13.6 per cent) from Africa, 1,650 (13.2 per cent) from the Middle East, 3,250 (26 per cent) from Asia, 350 (0.28 per cent) from Latin America, and 200 (0.16 per cent) are stateless persons.

2. Young males constitute the largest group of refugees, followed by young couples, then families with children and also single women with children. The majority of the refugees are from urban and relatively educated backgrounds.

3. A total of 1,534 individuals applied for asylum in 1993. The largest groups of asylum-seekers came from Romania (546), Ethiopia (335), Bulgaria (71), the former Yugoslavia (54) and Turkey (50).

4. During 1993, 1,955 persons (1,645 cases) - including cases of the 1992 backlog - were examined by the Italian authorities. Of this caseload, 165 persons (138 cases) were granted refugee status under the Convention, while 1,790 persons (1,507 cases) were rejected. A further 600 applicants did not appear for their hearing before the Commission.

5. The overall recognition rate was 8.4 per cent, representing an increase of 5 per cent over the 1992 recognition rate.

6. Temporary asylum on humanitarian grounds was granted to an estimated 5,000 Somalis and some 35,000 individuals from the former Yugoslavia. Both categories are authorized to work in Italy, but only those from the former Yugoslavia benefit from special assistance programmes. At 31 December 1993, 3,449 destitute victims of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia were accommodated in *ad hoc* reception centres, mainly in northern Italy. Somalis and persons from the former Yugoslavia who benefit from temporary asylum are, in principle, not precluded from applying for refugee status.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

7. In response to the High Commissioner's appeal, Italy has declared its intention to accept 400 Bosnian ex-detainees and their families. At the end of 1993, 147 persons had arrived under this scheme and 58 medical evacuees from Sarajevo had been admitted into Italy for treatment.

8. A working group was set up by the Minister of Social Affairs to discuss the question of admission of victims from the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. This working group has produced a draft regulation, adopted by the Italian Government on

14 April 1994, defining criteria and establishing a procedure for the admission of this particular category of asylum-seekers. Another inter-ministerial working group was set up to deal specifically with alien minors.

9. Two initiatives were launched, one by the Italian Refugee Council and the other by the Minister of Social Affairs, which aimed to introduce a new comprehensive law on asylum. The Branch Office in Rome has submitted its comments underlining the particular protection needs and respective procedural safeguards for refugee women and children.

10. The Branch Office maintains a liaison function with a number of United Nations Agencies based in Rome and ensures UNHCR representation, information sharing and reporting at a local level.

Programme objectives and priorities

11. At a policy level, UNHCR will aim to ensure the adequate protection of asylum-seekers and refugees in Italy in 1994 and 1995, as well as access into the country for asylum-seekers. The Branch Office's presence, as an observer, on the Central Eligibility Commission will continue. In this connection, UNHCR will continue to supervise the application of eligibility criteria, set precedents, monitor jurisprudence and provide training, as well as information on countries of origin to government officials involved in refugee status determination.

12. Training activities, aimed at the dissemination of Refugee Law, will continue to be undertaken by the Branch Office. These activities are primarily directed at lawyers, government officials, social workers and other individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with refugees.

13. In 1993, the Branch Office in Rome expanded its public information activities - especially media relations - to increase awareness of refugee issues and use public information as a tool for the protection of refugees. The activities involve, inter alia, producing an Italian version of "Refugees" magazine and other documents issued by Headquarters, as well as implementing educational and other public awareness projects. The Italian Government has agreed to produce and distribute 13,000 copies of an Italian version of the UNHCR biennial report, The State of the World's Refugees, free of charge, with the cost of translations being covered by the Italian authorities and publication scheduled for mid-1994.

14. In regard to private sector fund raising activities, Branch Office Rome has successfully implemented a programme involving the corporate sector, local authorities and private donations. Such activities are planned to continue and expand in 1994 and 1995.

15. Further plans are currently being developed to widen the public information and fund raising network. A joint public information/private sector fund raising campaign will be implemented in cooporation with Italian Telecon.

16. Resettlement processing of refugees who are transferred from other countries to Italy for this purpose is expected to continue in 1994 and 1995 on a reduced scale. The Government grants entry visas to these refugees transiting, on a case-by-case basis, and UNHCR assistance is provided until they are resettled. In 1994,

it will include about 170 Iraqi refugees in Malta recognized under the UNHCR Mandate.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

17. The Italian Refugee Council (CIR) continued to implement a major part of UNHCR's local settlement and care and maintenance programmes by providing counselling and orientation to asylum-seekers and refugees on a case-by-case basis and intervening, where necessary, with local authorities to facilitate requests from needy refugees for assistance under the UNHCR/Ministry of Interior project. Particular attention is given to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as single women with children, the handicapped and the elderly.

18. The Ministry of Interior is becoming increasingly involved in the local integration of newly arrived refugees. In 1994, UNHCR's contribution to the local settlement programme in Italy finances 20 per cent of the total funding required (compared to 25 per cent in 1993), while the Italian Government assumes the remaining 80 per cent. A large part of the Ministry's contribution provides one-time integration grants for newly recognized refugees in order to allow them to become self-sufficient more rapidly.

19. The Branch Office in Rome implements a small project jointly with the Migrantes foundation to provide counselling services, mainly to refugees undergoing resettlement processing.

General Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

20. In 1993, the care and maintenance project was reduced due to the transfer of funds to the local settlement project. Overall savings were identified under the project in instances where financial assistance for individual cases was obtained from the Government.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

21. The trend of decreasing UNHCR's care and maintenance programme while slightly increasing assistance for local settlement will continue in 1994. In line with the increased government support as mentioned above, UNHCR will reduce its support by 20 per cent of the total funding required.

22. For 1994, provisions were made, within the care and maintenance programme, for the processing of up to 140 refugees in Malta for resettlement in the United States. Since the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service interviews take place in Rome, only eligible refugees are transferred from Malta to Rome, where they stay for one week. Travel costs are covered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNHCR's contribution will cover accommodation and local travel costs.

23. Assistance provided to elderly, infirm and handicapped refugees, and homes for the elderly will also be covered by the care and maintenance project. The project was increased to finance integration grants for recently arrived refugees

to enable them to settle and become self-sufficient more rapidly. Funds are allocated for small work integration projects. The Branch Office in Rome and the CIR will work closely with the Ministry of Interior both to increase awareness of the project at local authority level and to streamline procedures under the Ministry project to reduce the time required for the disbursement of the grants.

24. In the course of 1994, CIR is expected to be able to deal with all individual casework previously handled by UNHCR. Progressively, CIR is seeking alternative sources of funding for its activities in this regard and has launched an independent fund-raising initiative in coordination with the Danish Refugee Council.

1995 programme proposals

(a) **Care and maintenance**

25. In 1995, assistance will continue to be provided to refugees transferred from other countries for resettlement purposes and also to retain minimum emergency provisions for vulnerable groups (mainly single women with children), the handicapped and minors, pending receipt of economic assistance from the Italian authorities.

(b) **Local settlement**

26. Administrative assistance to the Italian Refugee Council will continue to be provided pending the development of a fund-raising programme with local authorities and private sources. The agency will increasingly take over aspects of assistance to individual cases previously handled by UNHCR.

Special Programmes

Humanitarian Assistance to Displaced Persons from the Former Yugoslavia

(a) **1994 planned implementation**

27. In the context of the UNHCR Special Operation for Former Yugoslavia, the Branch Office in Rome is involved in the implementation of a project for logistical support to the Sarajevo Airlift Operation from Ancona Airport both for the airlift and the medical evacuations. Staffing at Ancona consists of over 200 officers and airmen plus six UNHCR staff members.

(b) **1995 programme proposals**

28. Funding for the continuation of the former Yugoslavia airlift support programme has been foreseen for 1995.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

29. The new Representative took up his functions in February 1993. Staff costs in Italy were higher than expected. The extended sick leave of a staff member had to be covered through temporary assistance from February until September 1993 and increased private sector fund raising activities required temporary clerical assistance for six months from June to November 1993. The Government continues to offer rent-free office premises, yet expenditure was incurred for their renovation as well as for the installation of additional security devices which were required after the Office was threatened by rejected asylum-seekers.

30. In order to provide support to the airlift operation to Sarajevo from the Falconara airbase in Ancona as of February 1993, UNHCR established a presence in Ancona. Two international staff were assigned to the airbase and four local staff members were hired. Costs incurred covered office rent, general operating expenses, and the purchase of essential office equipment and supplies.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

31. An Associate Resettlement Officer post has been discontinued effective 31 July 1994. Pending a review of private sector fund raising activities in Europe, a Fund Raising Clerk will continue to be covered by temporary assistance. An allocation for non-staff costs related to this activity has also been included in the revised estimate. The security situation will require a continuation of the services of a security company.

32. Given the importance of the airlift activities in Ancona related to the Special Operation for Former Yugoslavia, the UNHCR presence established in 1993 was formally converted to a Field Office in January 1994. Five posts, (four in Ancona and one in Rome) were consequently created effective 1 January 1994 and one professional post was transferred from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Italy.

(c) 1995 programme proposals

33. The post of Fund Raising Assistant was extended from December 1994 to December 1995 and a Programme Assistant post will be discontinued effective 31 July 1995. Provisions have been made for public information activities, including translations, printing and distribution of information material, and an amount has been included for private sector fund raising activities. Higher living costs are expected to result in a slight increase in expenditure for utilities.

34. It is proposed to continue the support for the airlift operation in the former Yugoslavia in 1995 at a similar level as in 1994.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN ITALY

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
778.3	367.0	362.2	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	318.7
0.8 a/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
552.2 b/	799.0	797.7	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	762.3
–	–	773.5	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	722.9
1,331.3	1,166.0	1,933.4	SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS	1,803.9
1,266.7	1,045.8	472.6	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	472.4
2,598.0	2,211.8	2,406.0	T O T A L (1)	2,276.3
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
1,748.9	–	3,656.3	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS FROM THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA	1,712.6
–	–	421.3	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	224.6
5.6	3.2	–	OTHER TRUST FUNDS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	–
1,754.5	3.2	4,077.6	T O T A L (2)	1,937.2
4,352.5	2,215.0	6,483.6	GRAND TOTAL (1+2)	4,213.5

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ of which US$ 4,777 incurred against Overall Allocation